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Human Rights Commission
47th Session
Item 19

Intervention by Liberation
Report of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities

Mr Chairman and honourable members,

This organisation wishes to place on record its appreciation for the Sub-Commission's continued concern with the human rights situation in East Timor, as expressed in its Resolution 1990/15. We also appreciate the efforts of the Secretariat to submit a special document on the Situation in East Timor (E/CN.4/1991/37), pursuant to operative paragraph 4 of the Sub-Commission's resolution.

We note with satisfaction too that a number of member states have made substantive comments on the human rights situation in East Timor. Of particular relevance are the highly critical comments made by the Luxembourg ambassador, speaking on behalf of the European Community under Item 12 of the agenda. The comments are not unrelated, we believe, to the visit made last October to East Timor by diplomats in Jakarta, including diplomats from several European Community countries. It so happens that the diplomats' visit occurred just when the human rights situation in Dili and elsewhere in East Timor took a decided turn for the worse.

Sub-Commission Resolution 1990/15 asked the Indonesian authorities to facilitate access to humanitarian organisations to visit East Timor, a request that was reiterated by The Twelve. How then does the Commission respond to the remarks made in the Right of Reply by the Indonesian delegation under Item 12 which amount to the imposition of conditions on non-governmental organisations before they will be permitted to visit East Timor? They are required to "display by words and deeds that they are truly sincere in their goodwill and will examine objectively the human rights situation of the Indonesian (sic) people of East Timor". In other words, the Indonesian Government is asking NGOs to give an undertaking not to investigate the true facts. The Indonesian delegation also said it would be "inconceivable" for anyone who had made derogatory remarks about human rights in East Timor to be allowed access. This means that no organisation that has ever said anything critical about human rights in East Timor will be allowed in, closing the door to some of the most widely respected human rights organisations that enjoy the confidence of the UN human rights network.

It is essential for the Commission to deal with such an attitude on the part of one of its members. Otherwise, yearly efforts by the Sub-Commission to press for independent investigation of the facts in East Timor will lead nowhere. In our opinion, the very least the Commission should do is insist that Indonesia grant unconditional access to human rights organisations to examine the many reports now reaching us of arrests, torture, disappearances and summary executions.

Thank you.

Delivered on 4.III.1991
by Anta Ponnajah.